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THE RIVALS

A Romance of the Civil War.

By

J. M. HOLMES,

HARRINGTON, DELAWARE.

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The Rivals

A Romance of the Civil War.

BY
J. M. HOLMES.

On a rough hill beside the James
An old Virginia cottage stood;
A little cottage neat and clean,
Just off the road down near the wood.
Standing out from its grand old pines,
Robed in their varied tints of green;
Over the door were creeping vines
With blossoms red as glowing flames.

Before the war of sixty-one
There came from somewhere far away,
And dwelt there quietly alone
A stately woman, tall and gray;
With rich strong face, but deeply lined,
A lady; poor, proud and unknown:
With noble mien and cultured mind,
And brought with her an only son.

They lived apart from all the world,
And toiled to gain their daily bread;
An eagle in a parrot's cage,
A flashing diamond set in lead,
The Ermine in the miry clay,
An Emperor upon the Stage,
Were not more out of place than they.
A Queen had from her throne been hurled.

A social queen who had been born
To wealth and noble family name,
Whose mental power had ruled by right,
And others yielding to its claim
Had bowed acknowledging its might;
But all the past, its wealth and fame
Were buried in misfortune's night,
And she had felt the sting of scorn.

A rival family's deathless hate,
A family feud a century old,
A hate descending with the name,
Inherited with lands and gold,
That grew in bitterness with age,
Had kindled into sudden flame,
And in the madness of its rage
Had dealt this cruel blow of fate.

The haughty Lionel De Lane
Had in his deep bad nature felt
The glow of love's delicious fire,
And as the glittering ice must melt
In the warm sunbeam's soft embrace,
He had to love, adore, admire
That lovely, breathing, beauteous, grace:
He little dreamed he loved in vain.

Light kindles in the midnight cloud,
Its somber folds are snowy white,
The glory flashes through the skies,
The trembling, throbbing, pulsing light
Fills, glorifies, in splendor burns;
Then blushing, smiling, quivering, dies,
The sudden rayless gloom returns,
And thunders echo deep and loud.

So love had flashed through his dark soul,
One face, one voice, one graceful form
Had filled his heart as light will fill
The dark cloud in the midnight storm;
As music's soft melodious sound
Can charm the deadly serpent's ear,
So love, his dark proud heart had found
And brought him under sweet control.

A great gray mansion, oak embowered,
Tall, Ivy-covered, dark and old,
Stood by a reedy broad lagoon.
The water lily's heart of gold
Reposed on petals white as snow.
The long gray moss in rich festoon
Hung from the live oaks, swinging low,
To kiss the green sward, violet flowered.

And in that mansion old and gray,
There dwelt fair Annie La Revelle,
Whose graceful form and lovely face
Had won the haughty Lionel.
And yet that form, so pure, refined,
Was but a robe of silken lace
That hung upon a lovelier mind,
And gave her soul its light array.

That soul as gentle as a dove,
Was strong in constancy and truth,
For she had loved in depth and power,
And holy ardor from her youth,
One noble man and only one,
And sooner would the opening flower
Think of turning from the sun,
Than she of turning from her love.

Her love burned like an altar flame,
Hidden far from others' sight,
Known only to the chosen priest
Who ministered before its light.
Words were not used, the happy glance
Was all that spoke the soul's rich feast;
But each heart felt the sweet entrance,
The depth of joy without a name.

The one she loved was true and brave,
As open as the light of day,
His widowed mother's joy and pride;
For since his father went away
To meet false honor's cruel call,
And in the dreadful duel died,
Her noble, manly son was all
She had to love, this side the grave.

Her noble husband fought and fell
Because he knew he had to fight
An insult, in a public place,
Base trampling upon his right
Compelled him to call out his foe,
Or else abide the deep disgrace;
He died beneath his rival's blow,
The father of proud Lionel.

And then as if a cruel fate
Determined to prolong the strife,
Their sons were destined soon to stand
Rivals and enemies for life:
Both loved, but only one could win,
Each sought to gain the same fair hand,
And he who lost must feel within
The perfect pain of jealous hate.

One Sabbath eve in balmy June,
When holy twilight soft and gray,
Thin as the veil of blushing bride,
Fell o'er the face of closing day:
The widow's son and Annie strolled
Slowly down by the waters side,
And no one heard what each one told,
But lillies in the broad lagoon.

They stood alone upon the shore,
A silent music filled the sky,
Their hearts were throbbing with the bliss
Of perfect love that cannot die.
They knew that love alone was life,
And in the pure and holy kiss
That sealed her for his promised wife,
Each felt that heaven could give no more.

One evening when the after-glow
Was slowly fading in the West,
Young Lionel De Lane declared
The passion that consumed his breast.
He in the fullness of his pride
Supposed that she his feeling shared,
And asked her to become his bride
But heard a calm, decided "No."

Christ pity him whose heart must ache
With anguish thy heart could not know.
Whose tender, joyous love must turn
To agony and ceaseless woe;
Must be a source of hopeless grief,
An everlasting fire to burn
The heart that cannot find relief,
That cannot rest, but will not break.

The sullen boom of Sumter's guns
Rolled o'er the South and summoned all
Her men to almost holy war.
Her women heard the martial call,
But deeper heard death's solemn tone,
Like billows sobbing on the shore,
But hushed, love's agonizing groan
And gave their heart's blood in their sons.

Mother and son both heard the call.
Each heart responded, "Here am I."
Heroic purpose filled each mind,
But each soul heard the other's cry
Of agony and love combined—
Each felt 'twere easier far to die
Than part and one be left behind—
But cheerfully both gave up all.

No word was spoken, but all day
The silent anxious hours went by,
As each one worked 'til it was late,
But neither asked the reason why.
Each heard the mighty call of fate,
But only answered with a sigh,
And kissed in silence at the gate
At evening when he went away.

She stood and watched his manly form
Grow dim a-mid the gathering shades,
'Til she saw nothing but the gloom
That wraps the world when daylight fades;
Then turned and entered her still room,
Feeling as Christ felt when betrayed,
He went alone to meet his doom,
And let his grief burst like a storm.

All night her spirit's bitter cry
Went out to God for strength to bear
The pain of love's great sacrifice,
The fellowship of suffering share
With those who pay the awful price;
For strength and hope wrung from despair,
And like her Lord she went back thrice,
Then heard Him say, "Fear not, 'tis I."

Christ; not an angel, brought her power
In her Gethsemane of woe.
Then she arose and said: "Thy will
Be done, O Lord, If I must go
And die with thee on Calvary's hill,
There meet death's cruel, crushing blow,
My soul shall know thy 'Peace be still',
And calmly wait the appointed hour."

Her son walked on alone all night,
A martyr going to his fate,
He saw through tears that filled his eyes
His mother at the garden gate.
But duty's call was loud and clear,
His honor claimed the sacrifice,
He could not yield to ease nor fear,
But reached the camp by morning light.

Sworn in, and uniformed, and drilled,
He stayed in camp 'til he had learned
All that a new recruit should know;
While in his heart a passion burned,
That he might soon be told to go
On to the field to meet the foe,
Give the invader blow for blow,
And hurl him back! tho' he were killed.

At early dawn the Long-Roll beat,
And all the camp sprang into life;
"Fall in!" The order was obeyed,
By heroes anxious for the strife.
Orders to march were quickly read
To men who could not be afraid;
"Send good men, quick!" was all they said,
They all were good: none would retreat.

The prisoner, breaking from his cell,
Filled with the joy of being free,
Is no more glad to get away
Than these recruits desired to be
Where men must stand to fight or fall,
Tho' life must be the price they pay—
To save the South they'd give up all
And storm the very gates of Hell.

They reached the field just as the light
Was dying in in the bloody West
That gloomed 'til all the sky was craped,
For heroes in their dreamless rest.
But they were glad to take their place
And let the skies for them be draped:
The cause must suffer no disgrace,
They'd sleep with them to-morrow night.

Next day death cut a long, wide swath
Through fields of men, who fell like grass,
And left them lying in long rows,
Not singly, but in bloody mass;
Broken and cut, crushed, shot and torn,
Just as a mower when he mows
Will mix the flower, grass and thorn,
So death united South and North.

A silent dawn, no sound of strife
Looked on a field where Hell had heaped
Cannon and saber, musket, sword,
By which the spectre Death had reaped;
A harvest of the true and brave,
Who only sought the rich reward
Of those who freely died to save
That which they valued more than life.

During the night with stealthy tread
The enemy made his retreat,
Leaving his thousands who had died
To those who gave him his defeat.
The burying squads with pick and spade
Soon friend and foe, laid side by side
In the long trench, which they had made—
Peace was declared between the dead.

The new recruits had fought and won:
Sprang into heroes in a day,
The honor, pride and joy they felt
Blended as in the sunset's ray,
When in the splendor of the skies
All colors, tints and beauties melt,
Change and unite as daylight dies
In all the glories of the sun.

Regiments reformed, companies filled,
The new recruits were in demand
To take the place of those who died;
'Twas known that they knew how to stand.
The widow's son was promptly placed
With veterans who were true and tried;
And cheerfully all dangers faced,
Whose fearless Colonel had been killed.

All mourned the Colonel who was slain;
So brave and true, so firm and kind,
They heard a stranger from afar
To their command had been assigned.
When he arrived the regiment cheered,
Shouting his welcome to the war,
One soldier neither feared nor cheered
His Colonel: Lionel De Lane.

The widow's son was strong and brave;
Calmness increased as dangers grew:
His Colonel was his bitter foe,
And he had power now to do
All that he thought would seal his fate,
Where he was ordered he must go;
Obey the man inspired by hate,
Whose word could put him in his grave.

Next day the Colonel recognized
The widow's son among his men;
His rival under his control,
A hell of jealous fury then
Like an immense volcano burst
Within his dark revengeful soul;
And he resolved to do his worst
For him he hated and despised.

All night the Colonel in his tent
Thought of the man who'd spoiled his life,
His rival who had won the heart
Of her he wanted for his wife.
'Twas he, and he alone, who stood,
Between them and kept them apart:
'Twas his turn now and so he would
Give hatred and rage full vent.

But thoughts and feelings which have met
In suffering in one heart and mind
Are one and cannot be divorced:
Feeling and thinking are combined—
Love can defy the tyrant, Will,
The loving heart cannot be forced;
And so he found he could not kill
His love for her, but loved her yet.

Hatred and love in hopeless war,
Heaven and Hell clenched in the fight,
Curses and prayers rolled into one,
A sudden hope, a flash of light!
His love flowed as the rising tide,
Hate and death for the widow's son,
He must have Annie for his bride—
He'd stake his all and try once more.

In a great mansion old and gray,
A quiet room, a shaded lamp,
A letter on the table lay,
A letter post marked, "Soldier's Camp."
Annie had read, with bitter pain,
Words which like lightning burnt their way
Into her heart and into her b
And filled her soul with dire *may*.

"My Colonel, Lionel De Lane" —
The man she loved, under the hand
Of one that in her heart she loathed. —
"Now has full power to command,
And I of course must now obey
My rival, who is fully clothed
With all authority to say
Where I shall go or where remain."

The shaded lamp burned all night long,
She had no mind nor time for sleep,
She knew this battle must be fought,
She prayed and planned but did not weep.
She also had a hero's heart,
Ready to suffer; fearing naught;
Anxious to act the hero's part—
The morning found her calm and strong.

Another letter came next day
From Colonel Lionel De Lane;
"Stating that he would pass that way
And feeling he could not refrain
From calling on Miss La Revell
And with her kind permission stay
Awhile, before he said, Farewell
And from her tore himself away."

Calm, strong, brave and self possessed,
She saw that she must entertain
The man that she had once refused.
She certainly could not explain
Why she desired to exclude
An old time friend and be excused
For acting positively rude.
So she received him as her guest.

A woman's instinct seldom errs,
She knew this was a planned campaign
To win the battle he had lost—
Through changed conditions he might gain
The dearest purpose of his life:
He'd win the prize at any cost,
If he could get her for his wife;
But knew the victory would be her's.

The Colonel could not bear suspense,
He felt that he must speak or die,
So once when they were all alone,
He suddenly resolved to try
To make her promise that she'd give
Herself to him, and be his own,
And then in perfect love they'd live
A life of happiness intense.

She calmly listened, then replied:
"You mentioned this to me before.
Since then I have not changed my mind;
My love is now engaged in war.
If he should live, or if he's slain,
I am not in the least inclined
To marry you, but shall remain
His: as his wife or spirit bride.

And so I'll never be your wife:
And bid farewell to love's sweet dream—
In Dismal Swamp's polluted air,
A log house by a sluggish stream,
Where plovers cry and serpents crawl—
If the dear one I love is there—
Is richer than a stately hall
With murdered heart and loveless life."

The Colonel saw he'd lost the fight;
Nothing was left but to retreat,
He had no words to make reply,
He'd suffered an immense defeat.
With dignity he must retire—
The soldier cannot always die.
So under her terrific fire,
He said "Good-bye" and left that night.

Dismissed, rejected, humbled twice,
He saw that he could never win
Her for his wife, so he must turn
Upon himself, and fight within.
To hate her with the widow's son;
Kill out all love: let vengeance burn!
And always think of them as one
'Til hatred turned his heart to ice.

Silently hatred's cold black tide
Flowed in his heart where starless night
With haughty and relentless pride
Gloomed over anger, violence, spite;
With fury all his soul would fight
All thought of marriage, love, or pride,
And realized a fiend's delight,
When every spark of love had died.

Let love and sorrow live and wait,
Better the nameless, changeless pain,
The crown of thorns kept fresh with tears,
The willingness they should remain,
And in your heart have equal share
Through all the changeful, coming years,
Sorrow is sweeter than despair,
And painful love than bitter hate.

This lesson men are slow to learn,
But women know it all by heart,
A precious secret, hidden deep,
She'd rather die than ever part
With that sweet pain, that hidden fire;
A sacred vigil she will keep
With love and pain and fond desire.
To keep alive the smoldering burn.

Better dwell with the Crucified,
Who suffers, loves and freely gives
Love for hatred, pity for blows,
Whether He suffers, dies or lives.
From His great heart His love still flows
For loving friends and bitter foes,
When no one cares and no one knows
Than to commit heart suicide.

When you have naught to live for here,
Nothing to die for "Over there,"
Your heart a grave yard, with no stone
To keep alive the memory where
You buried all your murdered powers;
You think and hate and live alone,
Place on no grave a wreath of flowers,
Nor leave them moistened with a tear.

Then you can keep cool under fire,
Iron and blood; crush, rush and crash!
Were music to the Colonel's ears.
In cannon's roar and saber's flash,
In cavalry's wild reckless dash.
He nor his men felt any fear;
He gloried in the fearful clash,
For death was his supreme desire.

The widow's son desired to live,
For love and life walk hand in hand,
He was as brave, as loyal and true
As his brave Colonel in command.
And he was ready to obey,
With any man to do or dare,
But not to throw his life away—
His life was not to waste but give.

Wounded and pale the widow's son
Among his suffering comrades lay,
In the long ward beside his cot
Two nurses waited night and day.
Neither had made the least delay
To come when she heard he was shot,
The Surgeon said, "they both could stay,
With them his battle could be won."

So Annie and his mother stayed,
United they began the war,
A new campaign was quickly planned;
Four against one, one against four.
Death was the one the four must fight;
The Surgeon was in full command,
And soon the foe was put to flight
By those who waited, nursed and prayed.

Love often saves where hate would kill,
A peaceful mind and happy soul
Prevade the muscles, nerves and brain,
And help to make the body whole.
His mother and his promised wife
With his own love helped him regain
His strength; and loved him back to life,
Assisted by the Surgeon's skill.



As soon as he could leave his bed,
Both women asked that he might be
Now furloughed, and allowed to go
Back home with them, and they would see
That he had quiet, peace and rest;
They'd make the journey safe and slow.
The Surgeon joined in this request,
"For they have saved his life," he said.

And so the Surgeon fully wrote
To Colonel Lionel De Lane,
Requesting that he would comply
With this desire and not detain
These ladies; but grant them relief
And give the bearer his reply,
"With great respect, Surgeon in Chief"
And Annie handed him the note.

With deep regret the Colonel said:
"I am compelled to answer, No,
He's lost much blood, his wounds are deep,
It would be death to let him go.
The roads are rough; the journey long,
He must remain to rest and sleep,
Then he'll recover and be strong,
But should he go, he'd soon be dead."

She felt she'd faint, she gasped for breath,
Her sight grew dim, her body weak,
She thought her very soul would die:
With trembling form and pallid cheek,
She stood the image of despair,
While he with haughty, cruel eye
Gazed at her with a heartless stare,
As cruel and as cold as death.

Just then the death-like silence broke.
"Oh no, Colonel" a voice replied,
"I command the wounded and sick,
The Surgeon knows whether the ride
Is worse for him, than to remain,
At home he will get better quick,
He'll go, get well, return again."
'Twas General R. E. Lee, who spoke.

These words of joy and comfort went
To Annie's heart and all was light,
The sunlight bursting through a cloud,
A meteor across the night,
Were not more glorious than his word,
She trembled; tried to speak; then bowed,
Her pale lips moved; no sound was heard,
Burst into tears and left the tent.

General Lee's strong face was set,
He watched the slight retreating form,
Calm as a summer's day his look,
Within there raged a mighty storm.
His tender heart could not be still;
In loving sympathy it shook,
Held silent by his noble will
In spite of all, his eyes were wet.

Home again in the old arm chair,
Sometimes under a spreading tree,
Stronger and better every day,
All were as happy as could be.
But he was getting well too fast;
Soon he would have to go away,
This pleasure was too sweet to last,
With mother, home and Annie there.

He felt the time had come to go,
Back to the field to bear his part.
All three were cheerful, no one wept,
Tho' each one had a heavy heart.
But men must go and women wait,
Each one a sacred silence kept,
And kissed Good-Bye down by the gate
Just as a soldier riding slow.

Stopped; to let his worn horse pant,
And all three hastened to his side
“What’s the news from the war?” they said,
Slowly and sadly he replied,
With weary voice and drooping head
As if he wished that he had died,
And shared the honor’s of the dead;
“General Lee’s surrendered to Grant.”



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